

She embodies why Black History is American history.

Thank you, giants; thank you, America; and God bless America for Black History Month—American history.

RECOGNIZING THE WINNERS OF THE HELEN RUFFIN READING BOWL COMPETITION

(Mr. CARTER of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor schools from Georgia's First Congressional District—Lyman Hall Elementary, Midway Middle School, and Savannah Arts Academy—for winning the regional Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl competition in Valdosta.

With their hard-fought victory, they now move on to compete in divisional competition in Statesboro on March 7. The competition started more than 30 years ago when Helen Ruffin, a librarian from Georgia, wanted to find a way to make reading more exciting for students at her school.

The Reading Bowl gained traction, and now it is a statewide tournament. In the competition, participants from each school answer questions prepared by the committee for points. Teams of students that answer the most questions correctly about certain award-winning children's books win the competition.

These three schools from the First Congressional District of Georgia beat over 40 teams to make it to the next level. I am proud we have this degree of passion for reading in Georgia, and I am thankful these schools are working hard to teach their students the value of reading.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate them on their accomplishments this year, and best of luck to them in Statesboro at divisional competition.

ACKNOWLEDGING LOCAL NAACP LEADERS

(Ms. DEAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DEAN. Madam Speaker, as Black History Month comes to an end, I would like to acknowledge some of my local NAACP leaders:

Ms. Val Ward of Willow Grove; Mr. Craig Brown of Cheltenham; Shaykh Anwar Muhammad of Ambler; Mr. John Milligan of Norristown; Ms. Diana Robertson of the Main Line; Mr. Johnny Corson of Pottstown, whose ancestral farm in Plymouth Meeting was a key stop on the Underground Railway.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank these and other local leaders for their tireless efforts toward racial equality.

Today, I am pleased to stand here to tell you about a roundtable that we held on Monday with Black business

owners. As one constituent expressed to me, they need allies; and so I stand here today as an ally for the Montgomery County and Berks County communities in pursuit of a world free from divides of race, ethnicity, gender, and nationality.

Yes, Black History Month is ending tomorrow. May we never stop celebrating Black History Month. It is our American history, and it is the pathway to equality for all.

CONGRATULATING TERESA HALEY

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Teresa Haley, who was honored as the Activist of the Year at the NAACP Image Awards last week.

Teresa is the president of her local NAACP branch in Springfield, Illinois, as well as the first female president of the NAACP Illinois State Conference. She has worked tirelessly to advocate for the Black community in Springfield and issues critical to NAACP members nationwide.

I have had the pleasure of working closely with Teresa in an effort to bring national recognition to the 1908 race riot site in Springfield by declaring the site a national monument. Ultimately, the riots that occurred at that site played an integral role in the formation of the NAACP in 1909, just a year after the race riots in Springfield.

I am proud to recognize Teresa's fearless leadership, and I look forward to continuing to work with her to bring this national recognition to Springfield, Illinois.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate Teresa on this prestigious honor. I am very proud of her.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(Ms. BONAMICI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BONAMICI. Madam Speaker, Benjamin Franklin said: "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." I agree.

I am proud to lead the Public Schools Week resolution with my colleagues, Representatives POCAN, GRAVES, and THOMPSON. This resolution recognizes the importance of and contributions of our public schools to the country and to our Nation's young people.

I came to Congress to strengthen public education and to make sure that all students, regardless of their race, color, national origin, ZIP Code, or family wealth, have an equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality, well-rounded public education.

At the State of the Union, I was disappointed to hear the President dismiss public schools as failing government schools. Public schools are not disconnected from the communities

around them. They are our schools, our children, our students in our communities; and it is our collective responsibility to do all we can to strengthen, not weaken, our system of public education.

I will continue to fight for public schools every day, and I am proud to honor them this week.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF ARLEIGH BIRK

(Mr. STAUBER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STAUBER. Madam Speaker, this week we said good-bye to a brave member of the Greatest Generation. Arleigh Birk, Minnesota's last known survivor of the horrific attack on Pearl Harbor, passed away just 2 days before his 100th birthday.

Arleigh Birk was born and raised on a farm in North Dakota and joined the Navy when he was 19 years old. He was a 21-year-old Navy gun director stationed aboard the USS *Honolulu* when Pearl Harbor was attacked on Sunday, December 7, 1941.

As enemy forces dropped bombs, Arleigh courageously returned fire. His ship suffered damage during the attack, and Arleigh was transferred to the USS *Denver*, where he fought numerous battles throughout the Pacific theater.

After that war, he was honorably discharged and married the love of his life, Marion. Together, they had five children.

On Minnesota's Iron Range, Arleigh became a local legend, known for his kindness and record of service.

Over the years, he kept in touch with many of his fellow veterans through the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association and often attended local events to honor the Americans lost on that infamous day.

Madam Speaker, Arleigh lived an inspiring life, and I am proud to honor him here today. While he may be gone, Arleigh's legacy of service, sacrifice, and courage will live on in our hearts and our minds forever.

RECOGNIZING THE SHIPES FAMILY OF BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

(Mr. COX of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COX of California. Madam Speaker, I rise in honor of Black History Month to recognize the Shipes family of Bakersfield, California, who have served as a pillar of the African American community for over 70 years.

In southeast Bakersfield, the Shipes' family business, Mr. Discount Plus store, has stood the test of time. First opened in the 1940s, the store is one of the last original Black-owned businesses in the Cottonwood neighborhood of Bakersfield, and it remains a beacon of Black entrepreneurship.